



To conform to your insurance the wearing of seat belts is mandatory.

[Click on the photo for more information.](#)

There is a common myth surrounding the use of seatbelts in forklift trucks — if their use isn't specified during a risk assessment, then they don't need to be used. **This is absolutely not the case.**

Put simply — this is a myth that needs to be squashed. 'No seatbelt' is an extremely rare exception to the rule, and one that should not be taken lightly. Otherwise, seatbelts should be regarded with the HSE's rule in mind: "Where restraining systems are fitted, they should be used."

While some forklift operators may prefer to not wear a seatbelt, your responsibility and obligation to ensuring their safety outweighs any notion of giving them an easy life. The main goal of your safety policy should always be reducing the risk of accidents and harm.

Any exception to the seatbelt rule will need to have extremely good justification behind it based on a thorough, realistic risk assessment, and it would usually require, not just one, but a combination of factors to be in place that dramatically reduce the risk of a lift truck tip over.

Minimise the consequences.

As is the case in all vehicles, ignoring your seatbelt won't cause an accident, but it can seriously minimise the consequences. In cars, the seatbelt is there to prevent the driver hitting the wheel or the windscreen in the event of a collision, but with forklifts operating at lower speeds than cars, many operators question the need to use them.

But with the open nature of forklift cabs, the risk here is full or partial ejection in the event of the truck becoming unstable and turning over. Without a seatbelt, it's common for the operator to fall out of — or be thrown from — the truck's cab during tip over. Even if this isn't the case, often the operator's natural instinct when a forklift starts to tip is to try and get out, but this just increases the risk of becoming caught under the truck — a process known as mouse-trapping.

The role of a seatbelt in a forklift truck is to prevent this from happening. It stops operators from trying to jump free or from sliding off their seat and outside the truck's cab (AKA its roll over protection system – ROPs) and risking serious crush injuries between the cab's framework and the floor.

The cost of avoidance

In 2016, a major UK steel firm was heavily fined following the death of a forklift driver who was found to not be wearing a seatbelt.

The driver was fatally crushed after reversing his forklift at speed and clipping a step, whereon he was thrown from the vehicle and crushed under its weight when it overturned.

Though the seatbelt did not cause the accident, the tragic consequences were a result of its absence, and this absence suggests complacency towards safety and a lack of guidance from management.

The hearing was told that the plant had - had an endemic culture of “not being bothered to wear a seatbelt” over numerous years.

Although he had received training instructing him to wear a belt, the rule had never been enforced by the company.

Since the incident, the firm has told staff that failure to wear a seatbelt would result in a dismissal.

Make it official.

Fatalities or serious injuries stemming from situations like the above are still far too common in the workplace, and it is up to the companies to drive a change in staff attitudes towards seatbelts on forklift trucks.

Operators carrying out similar tasks in the same environment day to day can soon become complacent over safety and **this is when managers need the confidence to step in and challenge bad practice.**

After all, wearing a seatbelt won't prevent an accident from happening, that's down to your operators (and their managers) to ensure work is carried out safely, but they need reminding that it could dramatically minimise the consequences for them should the worst happen. And not just on a one-off basis; your safety measures need to be continually reinforced to be most effective training and monitoring are great places to start.

Make seatbelts part of your company policy today. Not only could it save your colleagues from a serious injury (or worse), but once in your policy, **it becomes a legal requirement – so if you haven't already done so, you absolutely should.**



WRONG

THIS SEAT BELT IS WRAPPED AROUND THE BACK OF THE SEAT

THIS WILL NOT SAVE YOUR LIFE.